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STATE PASS USAID FOR GLOBAL HEALTH/K HILL, D CARROLL
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Amman Avian Flu Contingencies

Ref: State 219189

1. (U) Summary: Embassy Amman has implemented broad-based contingency planning for avian influenza that covers protection of USG personnel, continuity of operations, and our responsibility to American citizens in Jordan. Tripwires are in final clearance and will be posted on TRIPS. End summary.

Avian Flu Task Force Readies Amman Tripwires

2. (U) In October, post created an Avian Influenza Task Force that serves as an interagency planning forum and information clearinghouse for the official Embassy community and for the larger American citizen community.

3. (U) The AI Task Force has developed Jordan-specific tripwires through extensive discussion in-house and with relevant Jordanian organizations. Post will publish the tripwires on the classified Tripwire Reporting and Integrated Planning System (TRIPS) per reftel instructions.

Overview of Jordan's Medical Response Capabilities

4. (SBU) Jordan has small numbers of well-trained individuals in animal and human health surveillance systems, but lacks capacity at the lower levels. The same is true for its laboratories: Jordan has a small number of well-equipped, well-staffed labs but not many of them, and they cannot handle the highest level of analysis. Jordan's labs are unable to perform the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests that are essential to mounting an effective, rapid response to an influenza outbreak. The PCR test would have to be done elsewhere, adding days to a response time. Jordan has among the most effective, well-trained and well-equipped health systems in the region, but it lacks the "bench" of numerous, qualified personnel and effective systems that integrate at all levels. Post's view is that Jordan would be able to respond well to a small-scale emergency by throwing its top assets at the problem, but that these people and resources would quickly be overwhelmed by a larger crisis.

Responses to Individual Items in Reftel

Mission Briefings:

5. (U) (Reftel item 8(A)): Ambassador has led two Town Hall meetings on avian influenza, one for American staff and one for FSN staff, and a meeting of wardens where avian influenza was discussed. Hard copy information sheets in both Arabic and English on avian influenza were distributed at those meetings, and Embassy Amman has extensive avian influenza information available on its intranet and public websites. Mission also briefed the Overseas Security Advisory Council.

Medical Human Resources:

6. (U) (Reftel (8(B))): Post has a Regional Medical Office (RMO) staffed by one Foreign Service physician, a Regional Psychiatrist, three locally hired nurses and one support staff. RMO is responsible for Israel, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Peace Corps/Jordan has a full time RN as their medical officer. Post has several additional American and FSN staff with medical skills. There is no institutional mechanism for identifying these additional individuals; post's awareness of these skills is through informal means. Post has a group of bio-chem "first responders" already trained, equipped with personal protective equipment, and in place. RMO is developing plans for providing basic training to non-medical personnel to care for influenza patients.

Drugs and Medical Equipment:

7. (SBU) (Reftel (8(C))): Post has one hundred courses of Tamiflu at the chancery and a large supply of Cipro. The Peace Corps has ten courses of Tamiflu. The health unit has full protective gear (gowns, masks, goggles, gloves) for thirty persons, and roughly four hundred N-95 masks. Staff

at the Defense Attache Office and Military Assistance Program office have M-40 chem-bio masks. RSO's "first responder" group has a dozen sets of chem-bio protective gear.

Security for Drugs:

¶8. (SBU) (Reftel (8(D))): Post's supplies of Tamiflu are maintained in a secure location.

Stockpiling:

¶9. (U) (Reftel (8(E))): Embassy staff have been urged to stockpile food, water and medical supplies at their residences. The length of time that post could shelter in place, drawing upon these supplies, would depend on the number of staff and family members at post. Post has emergency stockpiles of gasoline, water, meals ready to eat (MREs) and diesel fuel in place and is augmenting that supply. The current supply of MREs is expired; new ones are on order and are expected at post within a month. In a crisis, post would be able to draw on goods in the on-site commissary. This would significantly augment post's current stockpile of emergency food and water. Peace Corps has their own Emergency Action Plan that includes specific gathering points that have been prestocked with food and water.

Continuity of Operations:

¶10. (U) (Reftel (8(F))): Post has up-to-date plans in place for operations from an alternate Embassy site. Emergency stores at that site are in the process of being replenished. Consular Section is completing a transition of its American citizen registration system from an in-house system to an internet-based system. Consular staff have successfully tested their ability to access these names and email addresses, and as of February 2006 will have those names available in a manner that permits the warden system to be run from any of several possible locations.

Essential Staff:

¶11. (U) (Reftel (8(G))): Post has just updated its drawdown lists for emergency and minimal staffing situations.

At-Risk Staff:

¶12. (U) (Reftel (8(H))): Regional Medical Office maintains a list of American staff who are at risk because of underlying medical conditions.

Pre-Planned Departure Packets:

¶13. (U) (Reftel (8(I))): Administrative packets to facilitate authorized/ordered departure have been prepared by the Human Resources Office and are ready for immediate use.

Border Closure:

¶14. (SBU) (Reftel (8(J))): Post has multiple options under various border/airport closure scenarios, including overland departure to Israel or Egypt, and by boat from Aqaba. Overland departure from Jordan might not be realistic or desirable if a pandemic was affecting neighboring countries. Embassy staff would likely be better off in Jordan, with its small population and good medical infrastructure.

Amcit Town Halls:

¶15. (U) (Reftel (8(K))): Post feels that physical town hall meetings for interested Amcits would not be feasible, given the nearly ten thousand American citizens resident in Jordan. Post's plan to maximize outreach on a fair basis is to promote information sharing through warden messages, additional warden meetings and post's public internet page. Other tools such as a "web chat" are being evaluated.

Engagement with Host Country:

¶16. (U) (Reftel (8(L))): Several sections at post, including AID, RMO, Econ, RSO, Military Assistance Program and Environmental Hub, routinely discuss avian flu issues with their GOJ counterparts, other contacts in Jordan, and regional contacts.

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